

Eisenhower Fellowship, and for 9 years served as the first Vietnamese citizen and the first woman to direct VVAF's programs in Vietnam. I was introduced to Thao by Bobby Muller 17 years ago, and since then, she has become a trusted source of invaluable advice for me and my staff. Even more than that, she is a friend to me and to my wife Marcelle, who once had the exhilarating experience of riding around the city of Hanoi on the back of Thao's motor scooter. Anyone familiar with Hanoi traffic knows what that means.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that none of the war legacy initiatives that have played such a central role in building a comprehensive partnership between the U.S. and Vietnam would have progressed as they have without Thao's constant encouragement and thoughtful advice. Fluent in English and a networker extraordinaire with unlimited positive energy, on a first name basis with many of Vietnam's top civilian and military leaders, academics and artists, and U.S. and foreign diplomats, Thao has helped build bridges between key players in both governments in ways that I doubt anyone else could have. For the past decade and a half, Thao has, more than anyone else, helped to smooth the way for the leaders of both governments to keep striving to deepen and expand our relations by overcoming distrust, bureaucratic obstacles, and cultural differences. Her efforts have had a profound and lasting impact on our relations, our mutual understanding, and on the lives of the Vietnamese and American people.

This work has been among the things I am proudest of having had a role in during my 48 years in the Senate. On behalf of myself and my wife Marcelle, I want to express my deepest appreciation to Thao Griffiths for her invaluable help in making it possible.

#### TRIBUTE TO DEAN SEIBERT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in 1986, when much of Central America was embroiled in armed conflicts in which hundreds of thousands of people, overwhelmingly civilians, were killed, a group of parishioners from the Franconia, NH, Congregational Church established Americans Caring Teaching Sharing—ACTS. They traveled to Honduras to support peace and justice through community development, beginning in the small subsistence farming village of El Rosario in the highlands of northwestern Honduras.

Since then, ACTS has become a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization involving hundreds of volunteers who have contributed thousands of hours to ACTS' mission of improving the lives of people in rural Honduras through community projects focused on basic healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, education, agriculture, and economic diversification. ACTS is governed and sustained by volunteers. Teams travel to Honduras several times a year, for a

week or 2, to help move the projects forward.

Over the years, the program has expanded to include about a dozen communities surrounding El Rosario. ACTS has developed a close working relationship with the villagers, who are the visionaries for progress. The villagers set the priorities and perform much of the labor. ACTS volunteers provide the technical skills, guidance, material resources, and hands-on help. The result has been a successful example of sustainable, community development in one of the most neglected, impoverished parts of the country.

In addition to the Honduran communities in which ACTS supports projects, it has developed partnerships and associations with many U.S. and Honduran organizations, institutions of higher education, and foundations.

I mention this to provide context and to highlight the extraordinary dedication and leadership of Dean Seibert, long-time resident of Norwich, VT, and professor emeritus at the Geisel School of Medicine, who has been affiliated with ACTS for over 20 years and led the organization for most of that time. He has visited El Rosario as team leader over 30 times. This year alone Dean traveled there three times. Some might find that remarkable, since Dean celebrated his 90th birthday in August. To those who know Dean, it wasn't remarkable at all. His enthusiasm and dedication are indefatigable.

Dean has long had an interest in community development and the challenges of providing healthcare to people of different cultures and traditions. He has worked with the Tohono O'odum, Navajo, Hopi, and Pueblo tribes in the American southwest, and he provided care to flood victims in the Mosquito Coast area of Honduras after Hurricane Mitch, to war refugees in Albania, Kosovo, and Liberia, to earthquake survivors in Pakistan and Haiti, and to flood victims following the Indonesian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. He received the Albany Medical College Alumni Humanitarian Award and the Geisel School of Medicine John H. Lyons award for humanism in medicine.

If that weren't enough, in the past year, Dean has played a central role in creating a new nonprofit, Honduran Tolupan Education Program—Honduran TEP—devoted to building libraries and providing other basic services in half a dozen marginalized Tolupan indigenous communities in the mountainous province of Yoro. Honduran TEP is based on the recognition that literacy and access to educational resources are fundamental to enabling the Tolucan to develop their communities and defend against corrupt entities that threaten their cultural survival.

In the Congress, we talk a lot about leadership, about what it means, about its importance. We talk about how the Senate can and should be the conscience of the Nation. When I think of

Dean Seibert and what he has done in his life, how he has used his medical training and experience, combined with his commitment to social justice, for the betterment of others born into extreme poverty or victims of tragic losses, I can't think of a better example of leadership and conscience.

For much of Honduras' modern history, the U.S. has propped up corrupt, abusive governments and provided their security forces with training and equipment to support poorly conceived strategies to combat drug trafficking and stop migration. The consequences for the Honduran people and Honduras' democratic institutions have been devastating. For the most part, it is not a history to be proud of.

But all Vermonters should be proud of Dean Seibert and ACTS' and Honduran TEP's volunteers for showing a different face of America to the people of Honduras—a face of generosity, compassion, opportunity, and hope.

#### TRIBUTE TO CA VAN TRAN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in 1988, after speaking with Bobby Muller, a Vietnam veteran who was wounded and later founded the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation—VVAF—to help alleviate the suffering of Vietnamese and Cambodians who were badly injured in the war, I met with President George H. W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker at the White House.

At the time, the United States and Vietnam did not have diplomatic relations. Vietnam's economy had been devastated by the war, but the U.S. had a trade embargo against the country which remained in effect for another 15 years. There were many hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who had been severely disabled due to war injuries, with no access to rehabilitation services. President Bush and Secretary Baker and I agreed that it was in the interest of the United States to begin reconciling with Vietnam by addressing some of the worst legacies of the war and that the way to begin was to use what later became known as the "Leahy War Victims Fund," administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, to provide artificial limbs and wheelchairs to victims of landmines and other unexploded ordnance—UXO.

That initiative, beginning in Vietnam, was expanded over the years to many other countries whose people have been harmed by armed conflict, and it continues to this day. One of the implementers of the Leahy War Victims Fund in Vietnam, starting in the early 1990s, has been Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped—VNAH—whose founder and president, Ca Van Tran, left Vietnam as a refugee in 1975 with hardly a penny to his name. Over many years, through hard work and perseverance, Ca became a successful businessman in the United States. After returning to Vietnam and seeing

the ongoing suffering of people who had no access to prostheses or wheelchairs, he founded VNAH. Since then, VNAH has carried out successful projects in multiple provinces and was instrumental in working with the Vietnamese authorities to write Vietnam's disabilities law, the first of its kind in the country.

Ca became a good friend to me and my wife Marcelle and to my staff. We have visited VNAH's projects in Vietnam, which now assist victims of Agent Orange as well as injured survivors of UXO accidents. The difference that Ca and VNAH's superb Vietnamese staff have made in the lives of the severely disabled and their families cannot be adequately described in words. People who lost one or both legs, who were crawling on the ground for years, finally received an artificial limb or wheelchair and their dignity restored. Parents, children, and siblings with cognitive and physical disabilities so severe they cannot speak, walk, sit up, feed, or clean themselves now have better care.

In recent years, Ca has had to cope with his own health challenges due to separate motor vehicle accidents both of which were due entirely to the negligence of other drivers. At one point, his own mobility was limited to a wheelchair. Yet as soon as he was physically able and Vietnam relaxed its COVID restrictions, Ca went back there to explore ways to expand VNAH's activities.

Ca has been an inspiration to me and to countless others in this country and in Vietnam. He overcame immense challenges as a refugee, and when he was financially able, he devoted his life to helping others far less fortunate. Although originally from the south, through sheer perseverance and dedication to helping others, he overcame the suspicions of the authorities in Hanoi. It is in no small measure thanks to Ca Van Tran and VNAH that the Leahy War Victims Fund became what it is today.

As I prepare to retire after 48 years in the Senate, I want other Members of Congress to know about Ca Van Tran. He is an exceptional example of the life-changing difference that one compassionate, dedicated person has made to overcome some of the painful legacies of the war in Vietnam.

#### RECOGNIZING THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD LEARNING

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate the 90th anniversary of World Learning, a nonprofit organization based in Brattleboro, VT, that is dedicated to building stronger human connections through people-to-people exchanges, international education, and global development programs.

World Learning is more than Vermont's window to the world; it is its door. Its history is deeply rooted in the Green Mountains of southern Vermont. The organization is guided

by our State's values of tolerance and interest in the world, living a purposeful life through serving others, and building communities by welcoming newcomers with empathy and dignity.

I am proud that World Learning's impact extends well beyond Vermont. World Learning through its School for International Training—SIT—administers more than 90 development programs in over 30 countries, teaching English to refugees, expanding STEM training opportunities, and increasing job opportunities for young adults from all backgrounds. World Learning's youth, academic, and professional exchanges bring over 2,000 emerging leaders annually to the U.S. from nearly 160 countries for degree and nondegree programs and professional development and networking opportunities. These programs build enduring ties between future leaders and their U.S. host communities and place American culture and values front and center.

In 1932, World Learning—at that time known as the Experiment in International Living—established the first program in the country to enable young Americans to study abroad and engage in intercultural communication. Through the Experiment, students first lived in the homes of families from the countries where they studied. The then-radical idea, of the “home stay,” as the Experiment's founder Dr. Donald Watt put it, is how people would “learn to live together by living together.”

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the Experiment sent young Americans across the Atlantic to Western Europe as peacemakers to assist in rebuilding war-ravaged communities across the continent. These young Americans became our Nation's first generation engaged in international community service and international volunteerism.

At the height of the Cold War, President John F. Kennedy asked young Americans to serve their country in the Peace Corps and build human connections and a greater understanding between nations and people. The Experiment was the inspiration behind the vision of international service by Kennedy and Sargent Shriver, the first Peace Corps Director. Shriver was a participant in the Experiment, traveling to Germany and Austria in 1934, and then leading other youth groups for the organization in 1936 and 1939. In 1964, another prominent innovator, Dr. John A. Wallace, founded SIT, an extension of the Experiment, and directed SIT until 1978. Jack was a good friend whose leadership at SIT built on the Experiment platform with programs that sent thousands of young learners around the world. Over time, World Learning has helped design and launch nearly 70 Peace Corps projects and train volunteers for service in more than 30 countries.

The Experiment also rose to the challenge of supporting the U.S. State Department in the largest refugee train-

ing and resettlement program in history, assisting more than 250,000 South East Asian refugees at processing centers in Thailand and Indonesia. They led skills assessments, English language instruction, and cultural orientation training. They demonstrated once again the organization's steadfast commitment to building human connections, healthy communities, and peace.

That commitment continues today, at World Learning's headquarters in the town of Brattleboro, where they welcome refugees and support their integration into communities around southern Vermont. As the first stop in Vermont for newcomers from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and elsewhere, World Learning brings together staff, faculty, alumni, and neighbors to offer language, cultural orientation, and friendship in a program that is a national model for effective refugee integration.

I have covered a lot of history in these remarks. That is to be expected when one speaks about World Learning and its many contributions over the past 90 years. This is a time when the world needs what World Learning offers and does best. Many of the challenges we face in my State of Vermont are the same challenges seen in towns and provinces in countries around the world, such as climate change, resettling refugees, combatting infectious diseases, protecting democracy, and the list goes on.

I am just one of many Vermonters who takes immense pride in World Learning's history of bringing people together to develop innovative solutions to shared challenges and to recognize our common humanity. I thank World Learning—its staff and faculty, alumni, and participants—for their achievements and important ongoing efforts.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, on December 12, 2022, I missed rollcall vote No. 387, confirmation of Tamika R. Montgomery-Reeves, of Delaware, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit due to my attendance at an event back home in Oregon that required me to fly back on a later flight. Had I been in attendance, I would have voted yea.

An expert in corporate law during her time as a corporate litigator in private practice, Justice Montgomery-Reeves has served as a Delaware State court judge since 2015. She has blazed a trail as the first Black woman to serve on both the Delaware Supreme Court and Delaware Court of Chancery. A jurist who has earned a reputation for fairness, consideration, and consensus-building, Justice Montgomery-Reeves has participated in thousands of decisions and authored more than 300 opinions since joining the bench.

Justice Tamika R. Montgomery-Reeves is imminently qualified and will do an exemplary job for the people